

UNDERSTANDING CARE LABELLING-PART 1 (109)

In 1972 the Federal Trade Commission passed a ruling requiring textile apparel to be labeled in order to instruct the cleaning of the garment. Certain items were excluded such as suede, leather, scarves and household items such as bedspreads and draperies. In a survey by the Cotton, Inc. Lifestyle Monitor it was reported that most people look at labels so:

- (1) they will know how to care for it.**
- (2) They will avoid shrinkage.**
- (3) They will avoid fading.**
- (4) It will last.**
- (5) It will not wrinkle.**

The intention of the care label was good, but unfortunately many problems occurred. Some manufacturers mislabeled garments and some labels are confusing. This should not put a black mark on those manufacturers who tested their garments and strive to use correct labeling. As a garment analyst I tested many garments for manufacturers who put out a serviceable fabric with correct labeling. I tested Ultra Suede, Gortex, Spandex, and Micromattique. I worked with the quality control people from DuPont, Tommy Hilfiger, Van Heusen and others who strive to produce a serviceable fabric with correct labeling. JC Penney has one of the best quality control testing for fabrics. I also worked with the Federal Trade Commission to order to bring to their attention mislabeled garments and confusing labeling. The Federal Trade Commission has brought action and fines against some manufacturers. An example of ambiguous labeling is one that reads "Use the Zircion method of Cleaning". The consumer is also often misled by labeling. For example a garment they purchased that has a dryclean label may not be entirely accurate. Manufacturers of high fashion and couture use dryclean labels since washable labels may not be construed by the consumer as high quality. Manufacturers also look to avoid customer complaints by having their item handled by a professional. This is not illegal since manufacturers need list only one method of cleaning. It also means that if a garment is labeled as drycleanable and you washed it which caused a problem it would make you liable. If a garment is labeled as washable and it is drycleaned, which produced a problem then the drycleaner would be considered liable.

To be continued.